

Common Core Postsecondary Collaborative



Framework to Aid State and
System Implementation Planning

Draft: September 2012




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The Common Core State Standards hold enormous promise by providing the opportunity to build coherence into the nation's public education systems. Existing educational governance, however, necessitates building a platform of consensus and commitment among stakeholders inside states and systems to facilitate the necessary changes.

As a result, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), the National Association of System Heads (NASHE), and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute (EDI) have joined together to develop a framework for the implementation of the postsecondary related aspects of the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core Postsecondary Collaborative, (CCPC) will work with selected states to create a framework for implementation that will be scalable. CCPC is intended to work with states to use the collaboration among systems and policymakers to achieve implementation of the CCSS across all of public education in the state – P-20.

The look and design of higher education engagement will vary from state to state; planning and developing strategies for the facets of this engagement will be the goal in each of the states with whom the Collaborative engages. Since making these changes coordinated and purposeful is the key to success, CCPC aims to support states as they:

1. *Clarify* the policy strands involved in postsecondary implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the state. Among them are:
 - Defining college readiness;
 - Redefining remedial and developmental education;
 - Achieving curricular alignment between K-12 and the first two years of collegiate work;
 - Providing dual enrollment opportunities for students who are college ready early in their high school career; and
 - Reforming teacher training—including pre-service programs, licensure and certification, as well as supporting professional development of practicing teachers.

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2. *Prepare* a map of the regulatory and policy authority for decisions required to implement the standards at each stage, and use this to determine the decision making process necessary to implement changes, along with the political and communications processes needed to engage in decision making.
 3. *Assess* system and state capacity to implement new standards and plan for postsecondary implications.
 4. *Develop* a state and system level implementation plan (including robust communications at each stage) with a clear timeline and sequencing of actions, paying particular attention to the relationship between state policy, system procedures, and institutional practices.
 5. *Create* a communications and engagement plan to reach multiple stakeholders in non-technical language, using a variety of means.

In engaging with the states, we will first work to build a foundation for dialogue about the Common Core State Standards and their implications for postsecondary preparation and success. Secondly, we will work with states to build a clear implementation plan for postsecondary implications of the CCSS.

The Big Picture

The figure below offers a “bird’s eye” view of the interlocking pieces associated with postsecondary implementation of the Common Core State Standards. While each state’s path will vary slightly based on history, culture, players, and governance structures, all states’ processes should share several essential elements. These include:

- **Goals** that are clear, compelling, and measurable;
- A **policy and practice agenda** that is rooted in a thorough assessment of current performance and future options;
- A **communications and engagement strategy** that includes a robust coalition from inside and outside the education policy world, strong messages, and appropriate vehicles to carry those messages; and
- An **integrated implementation plan** that weaves together policy and practices with communications and engagement and drives toward the stated goals.



Build a Foundation for Success

A. Clarify Goals for the State's Successful Postsecondary Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

Working through a leadership coalition, the state needs to achieve consensus on the specific goals it aims to pursue with respect to postsecondary implications of the CCSS. At this stage, it is important to get consensus both on the specific goals and the urgency of implementation from the leadership of the K-12 system, public higher education system(s), private higher education leadership, and key policymakers, particularly the governor. It is unlikely that all of the state's goals for postsecondary implementation of the CCSS can all be implemented simultaneously, and they will certainly not be achieved in one year. However, agreement on what is to be accomplished, in what timeframe and in what sequence is a vital starting place. It is also vital to create a coalition of all of these stakeholders and add to the coalition as specific goals come to the forefront.

B. Assess the State's Policy Environment and Capacity to Achieve the Goals

NASH will work with each state to map policy as well as the regulatory and legal environment for each of the state's goals for postsecondary implementation of the CCSS. The question of where the authority rests for a goal between systems and agencies needs to be clearly addressed in each state. Under whose authority these goals can/should be attempted? Does the governor have the requisite authority to mandate such alignment? Does the authority rest with a board of regents or trustees? The state board of education? Where authority is shared, what is the sequence of decision making? Should such alignment be mandated in law? These are all questions that must be explored in the early stages of goal setting.

The state, with EDI's help, must understand its capacity to deliver on its goals. It is essential to understand who all the relevant players are and what their influence over achieving the goal might be, especially when the goal is between systems. Does the leadership agree on the goals with similar degrees of commitment? Does the state have the capacity to collect the relevant data to determine success? How widespread is the understanding of the barriers to success? Are there strategies for reform? Is progress regularly being monitored, and problems solved along the way? What needs to happen structurally to make success more likely? Understanding current capacity will help the state leaders gain insight about the nature of the work required.



C. Create a Small Team that will Drive the Desired Outcomes

The power of the delivery methodology in the work of implementing the Common Core State Standards in postsecondary education in a state is that it does not rely on the existing administrative structures alone to drive change. Using a small team with a clear mandate from leadership to drive toward clearly stated goals is an effective tool to implement reform strategies. The team maintains focus on a narrow set of targets, and the data that show progress toward those targets. The existence of such a team creates and maintains a sense of urgency – what Sir Michael Barber calls “a restless search for improvement” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 231). The implementation team is the embodiment of the leadership’s ambition, and given the commitment of leadership to the goal, it can be single-minded in pursuing the stated goals. Achieving the changes required to realize the promise of the Common Core State Standards requires collaboration across systems and functions and requires a structure designed to realize this aspiration only – not to maintain the health of any one system.

The team should be connected to leadership for accountability, but should be perceived by the people at the front line of implementation as problem solvers, and monitors of progress – not supervisors. The team acts much as a coach – not playing the game but facilitating success. Additionally, the team needs to understand the barriers to success as well as those conditions/ people who will enable the achievement of the goal. Finally, the team will develop measures to monitor progress, work to solve problems along the way, and stay focused on the agreed upon goals.

D. Create a Coalition of the Interested

In working across systems, it is most important to gather influential people together who have an interest in success of the agreed upon goals. These people are the “inner circle” to whom you communicate most often and who can help move the message throughout the state. The success of the goals will depend on the support of this coalition as much as it will on the quality of the work of implementation. A coalition of powerful players in the state, who agree profoundly about the importance of these goals, will be a real catalyst for success. They may be called upon to remove bureaucratic barriers or be called on to give public support, or wise counsel. And they will become the first core of supporters as the state creates a communications and engagement strategy to build a broader base of support throughout the state.

Evaluate Current Performance and Build a Plan

A. Understand the Drivers of Performance

For each aspect of postsecondary implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the state should evaluate performance to date against the goal, and determine what data are most indicative of progress, as well as those data that might signal unintended consequences (see detailed descriptions below for the four aspects mentioned above). The purpose of this analysis is to reveal patterns and performance gaps. Ultimately, the aim is to discover why a particular pattern is being exhibited and which activities will drive performance in the direction of the goal.

B. Determine a Reform Strategy

This strategy should be based on a theory of change and should include targets and trajectories toward those targets. A theory of change will succinctly articulate the leadership's belief about the best way to achieve its goals. It is not a defense of the goal, but a statement about how such change might be realized in the particular circumstances within which a state finds itself. Within that theory, the leaders will have to select and sequence interventions to develop a reform strategy. As part of that development, leadership should hypothesize outcomes along the way to full implementation so that progress can be monitored – and strategies tweaked – if the desired outcomes are not on track.

C. Produce a Plan

The plan should be an operational tool, not an historical document. The plan will describe how you will organize the players to implement the interventions you have determined are necessary to achieve each aspect of the postsecondary implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The plan will include the targets for each goal, the interventions you have decided on to achieve these targets and all of the activities that will be created by each intervention. The particular structure of the organization will differ state to state, but generally each target should have an owner who is responsible for achieving that target/ goal. A well-crafted plan will articulate how the activities will be managed, what resources are available for the achievement of the target, what are the indicators of success, and will include an outline of risks. The plans will then need to be tracked, progress measured and problems solved along the way to build momentum toward the goal.

Interwoven with all the planning and implementation strategies must be a robust communications and engagement effort to create collaborative relationships among all the players in public education in the state. Structuring productive relationships among these systems will move the state toward building the capacity to sustain a coherent approach to public education P-20. In working with states to develop consensus and commitment to statewide implementation of the CCSS at the postsecondary level, the goal is to create an aligned planning structure that ties existing planning processes to student outcomes.

Issues to Consider – Policy Strands

While not all states will undertake efforts in all of these strands during the year of the CCPC grant, it is useful to elaborate a bit on each strand and include some questions to consider when thinking through efforts in each area. It will be obvious that these strands overlap and states will have to confront all of these issues over time.

A. Developing and Implementing a Statewide Definition of College-Readiness

Both consortia creating the common assessments are working to achieve an agreed upon definition of college-readiness, as defined by an agreed upon “cut score” on the summative assessments. PARCC and Smarter Balanced recognize that the success of the assessments they are developing depend on acceptance by higher education institutions as the definition of “college-ready.” The goal of both assessment consortia is to provide students, parents and schools with a clear, consistent message about expectations that must be met for students to be ready for collegiate level coursework in mathematics and English/language arts. And both consortia have developed some strategies to engage the higher education communities in agreeing on the assessment that will define college readiness.

CCPC is designed build on that work to help states develop the engagement necessary for the postsecondary systems to agree to a statewide definition of college ready. This will enable a consistent standard of evidence that students admitted to college or university can bring with them to be placed into college level coursework.

Key Questions:

- 1) Have higher education faculty/institutions/systems defined the set of skills and knowledge that are prerequisite for success in credit bearing coursework? Does this enumeration of required knowledge and skills align with the Common Core State Standards?
- 2) What kinds of conversations/votes/policies/laws are necessary to achieve this agreement on college readiness in the state?
- 3) Does your state have a process in place whereby all institutions and/or systems agree to a single cut score for placement? If not, where does the authority for making that decision lie?

B. Redefining Remedial/Developmental Education

All of the emphasis on college readiness begs the question of remediation in postsecondary education. Given the current state of affairs in which more than a third of all beginning students in higher education need some remediation before being ready to tackle courses leading toward a degree, K-12 and higher education systems must work together to create a broader pathway to college readiness. The current system of accepting these students and then using their tuition monies to offer them instruction at the high school level is not sustainable, either financially or morally.

The implementation of the CCSS will help push students toward readiness at the end of high school. This can counteract the trend of simply admitting students who are high school graduates that are “not ready” with the expectation that they need to pay to “get ready” to do college work. If it were simply expensive, that would be a problem; but it is also spectacularly ineffective, with fewer than 20 percent of students beginning in remediation ever graduating. Together, K-12 and higher education need to create a strategy to meet students where they are and get them to an appropriate skill level to begin college without using up their financial aid eligibility on high school work or using additional taxpayer subsidies to achieve what should have been achieved in high school.

Certainly, creating standards that are definitive of college readiness, and assessing students’ achievement against those standards is not sufficient to move all students to college readiness in the short run, so states must develop short and long term strategies to solve the problem of large numbers of high school students who are not prepared to do what is expected of them. This will require collaboration, innovation, and a willingness to look at the problem in new ways.

There are model programs to be emulated, and there should be some additional work (perhaps during summers) for students who are not on track to meet the standard. For example, the California State University has already worked to design twelfth grade coursework for students who don’t hit the “college ready” level on the statewide exam. This kind of collaboration has great promise for rethinking remediation at the college level. These kinds of collaborative solutions will require input from K-12 (administrators and teachers) as well as higher education (system staff, institutional leadership and faculty).

Key Questions:

- 1) To what extent are remedial courses offered as modules so that students can focus only on the content and skills that they are lacking?
- 2) Are there opportunities to offer additional supports to students that are “not ready” either during high school or in the summer prior to enrollment in a postsecondary institution? If so, are these opportunities readily available to students statewide?
- 3) Are there other funding models for this “catch-up” work – i.e. perhaps through adult education programs, or during students’ senior year in high school?

C. Aligning Curriculum between the Common Core State Standards and the First Two Years of College

Once the Common Core State Standards are implemented in the states, the expectation is that students arriving at postsecondary institutions will have built the requisite content knowledge and skills to succeed in first-year, credit-bearing coursework. Ideally the curriculum of the first two years of collegiate experience will build on students' prior learning and will not include repeated work, but will deepen understanding and impart higher order skills – especially through the general education (or pre-major) core of coursework. This will require a level of coordination and collaboration that is currently absent within most public higher education systems, and it will require this coordination and collaboration not only within the higher education system, but also between higher education and K-12.

CCPC will help states to develop a plan to achieve this collaboration to create a seamless transition from K-12 to postsecondary education within the participating states. To be clear, this alignment cannot be achieved within a year, but CCPC will help states identify and take the necessary steps to create an implementation plan for success.

Key Questions:

- 1) To what extent is postsecondary faculty aware of the expectations set forth in the Common Core State Standards? How do the state, system and/or institutions measure the level of awareness?
- 2) Which courses need to be aligned to the CCSS? Will this differ among institutions or systems?
- 3) Are efforts to align K-12 and postsecondary curricula already underway in the state? If so, where do they stand?

D. Creating Dual Enrollment/ Credit Options for High Achieving High School Students

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, there will be a group of high school students who demonstrate college readiness earlier than high school graduation. To have an integrated and efficient public education system, states will have to consider how to offer postsecondary educational opportunities to these students earlier in their educational journey. Some states already offer dual enrollment/credit options (both virtual and physical) to students who are ready for college work early.

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the near universal assessment of students' progress toward meeting the standards will require states to bring these programs to scale, and map statewide implementation while considering questions of funding, transferability of college credits, and a host of other issues.

Key Questions:

- 1) How are dual enrollment/credit opportunities funded in the state? Are there financial incentives to participate in a particular opportunity (i.e., Advanced Placement vs. dual enrollment/credit)? Are dual enrollment/credit opportunities readily available to students statewide?
- 2) In what ways does the state identify students to have the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school?
- 3) Do all types of college credit earned in high school transfer equally across institutions? In what ways do the state, systems, and/or institutions gauge the quality of the coursework?
- 4) How might the common assessments play into determining readiness/eligibility for dual enrollment/credit opportunities?

E. Planning to Produce Graduates of Teacher Preparation Programs with Knowledge and Competencies Needed to Effectively Teach to the Common Core State Standards

University-based teacher training programs currently meet the requirements imposed by certification regulations, national accrediting bodies, and internal demands of university structure. They need to be evaluated and likely redesigned to meet the goal of producing graduates who are effective teachers of the CCSS as measured by their students' proficiency. Beginning and setting parameters for that conversation will be the first step toward having a teaching workforce with the skills and habits of mind to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards.

In reviewing and revising teacher training programs and professional development to create a teaching workforce well prepared to teach to the CCSS, it is particularly important to include representatives from all of the constituencies who have a stake in defining and maintaining teacher quality. This must include education deans and representatives from the state education agency who are usually responsible for setting up requirements for certification of new teachers, and who typically have some program approval authority over the states' teacher training programs. In addition, representatives from school districts must also be at the table, as they are the "customers" for the graduates of teacher training programs. Groups responsible for induction programs for new teachers and ongoing professional development for teachers must also be at the table. Defining the goal for teacher training programs is critical, and assigning responsibility for achieving that goal will be complex in most states.

Understanding the drivers of current outcomes and the capacity to drive the goal is critical for this change effort, and with respect to teacher training and professional development, it is a complicated landscape. Teacher training programs typically develop curriculum in response to certification requirements, national accreditation standards and faculty interest.

Professional development similarly has several sources of both funding and desired outcomes. Gaps in capacity to achieve the goal must be identified and addressed. With respect to university-based teacher training programs, the process of curriculum development and approval at the institutional level must also be taken into account.

Key Questions:

- 1) To what extent do course(s) or practical experience requirement(s) need to be added or changed in the preparation program approval standards to ensure that educators get the information they need to successfully teach or supervise teaching of the CCSS?
- 2) How do the state and/or system evaluate the extent to which teacher preparation programs are preparing educators to teach to the CCSS?
- 3) To what extent is educator mastery of CCSS a component of the licensure/certification process?
- 4) How are teacher training programs aligned with induction programs for new teachers and professional development programs for educators in the state?